

111TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 614

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 21, 2009

Referred to the Committee on Financial Services, and in addition to the Committee on House Administration, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

AN ACT

To award a Congressional Gold Medal to the Women Airforce Service Pilots (“WASP”).

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. FINDINGS.**

2 Congress finds that—

3 (1) the Women Airforce Service Pilots of
4 WWII, known as the “WASP”, were the first women
5 in history to fly American military aircraft;

6 (2) more than 60 years ago, they flew fighter,
7 bomber, transport, and training aircraft in defense
8 of America’s freedom;

9 (3) they faced overwhelming cultural and gen-
10 der bias against women in nontraditional roles and
11 overcame multiple injustices and inequities in order
12 to serve their country;

13 (4) through their actions, the WASP eventually
14 were the catalyst for revolutionary reform in the in-
15 tegration of women pilots into the Armed Services;

16 (5) during the early months of World War II,
17 there was a severe shortage of combat pilots;

18 (6) Jacqueline Cochran, America’s leading
19 woman pilot of the time, convinced General Hap Ar-
20 nold, Chief of the Army Air Forces, that women, if
21 given the same training as men, would be equally ca-
22 pable of flying military aircraft and could then take
23 over some of the stateside military flying jobs, there-
24 by releasing hundreds of male pilots for combat
25 duty;

1 (7) the severe loss of male combat pilots made
2 the necessity of utilizing women pilots to help in the
3 war effort clear to General Arnold, and a women's
4 pilot training program was soon approved;

5 (8) it was not until August 1943, that the
6 women aviators would receive their official name;

7 (9) General Arnold ordered that all women pi-
8 lots flying military aircraft, including 28 civilian
9 women ferry pilots, would be named "WASP",
10 Women Airforce Service Pilots;

11 (10) more than 25,000 American women ap-
12 plied for training, but only 1,830 were accepted and
13 took the oath;

14 (11) exactly 1,074 of those trainees successfully
15 completed the 21 to 27 weeks of Army Air Forces
16 flight training, graduated, and received their Army
17 Air Forces orders to report to their assigned air
18 base;

19 (12) on November 16, 1942, the first class of
20 29 women pilots reported to the Houston, Texas
21 Municipal Airport and began the same military
22 flight training as the male Army Air Forces cadets
23 were taking;

1 (13) due to a lack of adequate facilities at the
2 airport, 3 months later the training program was
3 moved to Avenger Field in Sweetwater, Texas;

4 (14) WASP were eventually stationed at 120
5 Army air bases all across America;

6 (15) they flew more than 60,000,000 miles for
7 their country in every type of aircraft and on every
8 type of assignment flown by the male Army Air
9 Forces pilots, except combat;

10 (16) WASP assignments included test piloting,
11 instructor piloting, towing targets for air-to-air gun-
12 nery practice, ground-to-air anti-aircraft practice,
13 ferrying, transporting personnel and cargo (includ-
14 ing parts for the atomic bomb), simulated strafing,
15 smoke laying, night tracking, and flying drones;

16 (17) in October 1943, male pilots were refusing
17 to fly the B-26 Martin Marauder (known as the
18 “Widowmaker”) because of its fatality records, and
19 General Arnold ordered WASP Director, Jacqueline
20 Cochran, to select 25 WASP to be trained to fly the
21 B-26 to prove to the male pilots that it was safe to
22 fly;

23 (18) during the existence of the WASP—

24 (A) 38 women lost their lives while serving
25 their country;

1 (B) their bodies were sent home in poorly
2 crafted pine boxes;

3 (C) their burial was at the expense of their
4 families or classmates;

5 (D) there were no gold stars allowed in
6 their parents' windows; and

7 (E) because they were not considered mili-
8 tary, no American flags were allowed on their
9 coffins;

10 (19) in 1944, General Arnold made a personal
11 request to Congress to militarize the WASP, and it
12 was denied;

13 (20) on December 7, 1944, in a speech to the
14 last graduating class of WASP, General Arnold said,
15 "You and more than 900 of your sisters have shown
16 you can fly wingtip to wingtip with your brothers. I
17 salute you . . . We of the Army Air Force are proud
18 of you. We will never forget our debt to you.";

19 (21) with victory in WWII almost certain, on
20 December 20, 1944, the WASP were quietly and
21 unceremoniously disbanded;

22 (22) there were no honors, no benefits, and very
23 few "thank you's";

1 (23) just as they had paid their own way to
2 enter training, they had to pay their own way back
3 home after their honorable service to the military;

4 (24) the WASP military records were imme-
5 diately sealed, stamped “classified” or “secret”, and
6 filed away in Government archives, unavailable to
7 the historians who wrote the history of WWII or the
8 scholars who compiled the history text books used
9 today, with many of the records not declassified
10 until the 1980s;

11 (25) consequently, the WASP story is a missing
12 chapter in the history of the Air Force, the history
13 of aviation, and the history of the United States of
14 America;

15 (26) in 1977, 33 years after the WASP were
16 disbanded, the Congress finally voted to give the
17 WASP the veteran status they had earned, but these
18 heroic pilots were not invited to the signing cere-
19 mony at the White House, and it was not until 7
20 years later that their medals were delivered in the
21 mail in plain brown envelopes;

22 (27) in the late 1970s, more than 30 years
23 after the WASP flew in World War II, women were
24 finally permitted to attend military pilot training in
25 the United States Armed Forces;

1 (28) thousands of women aviators flying sup-
2 port aircraft have benefitted from the service of the
3 WASP and followed in their footsteps;

4 (29) in 1993, the WASP were once again ref-
5 erenced during congressional hearings regarding the
6 contributions that women could make to the mili-
7 tary, which eventually led to women being able to fly
8 military fighter, bomber, and attack aircraft in com-
9 bat;

10 (30) hundreds of United States servicewomen
11 combat pilots have seized the opportunity to fly
12 fighter aircraft in recent conflicts, all thanks to the
13 pioneering steps taken by the WASP;

14 (31) the WASP have maintained a tight-knit
15 community, forged by the common experiences of
16 serving their country during war;

17 (32) as part of their desire to educate America
18 on the WASP history, WASP have assisted “Wings
19 Across America”, an organization dedicated to edu-
20 cating the American public, with much effort aimed
21 at children, about the remarkable accomplishments
22 of these WWII veterans; and

23 (33) the WASP have been honored with exhibits
24 at numerous museums, to include—

1 (A) the Smithsonian Institution, Wash-
2 ington, DC;

3 (B) the Women in Military Service to
4 America Memorial at Arlington National Ceme-
5 tery, Arlington, Virginia;

6 (C) the National Museum of the United
7 States Air Force, Wright Patterson Air Force
8 Base, Ohio;

9 (D) the National WASP WWII Museum,
10 Sweetwater, Texas;

11 (E) the 8th Air Force Museum, Savannah,
12 Georgia;

13 (F) the Lone Star Flight Museum, Gal-
14 veston, Texas;

15 (G) the American Airpower Museum,
16 Farmingdale, New York;

17 (H) the Pima Air Museum, Tucson, Ari-
18 zona;

19 (I) the Seattle Museum of Flight, Seattle,
20 Washington;

21 (J) the March Air Museum, March Reserve
22 Air Base, California; and

23 (K) the Texas State History Museum,
24 Austin, Texas.

1 **SEC. 2. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

2 (a) AWARD AUTHORIZED.—The President pro tem-
3 pore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Rep-
4 resentatives shall make appropriate arrangements for the
5 award, on behalf of the Congress, of a single gold medal
6 of appropriate design in honor of the Women Airforce
7 Service Pilots (WASP) collectively, in recognition of their
8 pioneering military service and exemplary record, which
9 forged revolutionary reform in the Armed Forces of the
10 United States of America.

11 (b) DESIGN AND STRIKING.—For the purposes of the
12 award referred to in subsection (a), the Secretary of the
13 Treasury shall strike the gold medal with suitable em-
14 blems, devices, and inscriptions, to be determined by the
15 Secretary.

16 (c) SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.—

17 (1) IN GENERAL.—Following the award of the
18 gold medal in honor of the Women Airforce Service
19 Pilots, the gold medal shall be given to the Smithso-
20 nian Institution, where it will be displayed as appro-
21 priate and made available for research.

22 (2) SENSE OF THE CONGRESS.—It is the sense
23 of the Congress that the Smithsonian Institution
24 shall make the gold medal received under this Act
25 available for display elsewhere, particularly at other
26 locations associated with the WASP.

1 **SEC. 3. DUPLICATE MEDALS.**

2 Under such regulations as the Secretary may pre-
 3 scribe, the Secretary may strike and sell duplicates in
 4 bronze of the gold medal struck under this Act, at a price
 5 sufficient to cover the costs of the medals, including labor,
 6 materials, dyes, use of machinery, and overhead expenses.

7 **SEC. 4. NATIONAL MEDALS.**

8 Medals struck pursuant to this Act are national med-
 9 als for purposes of chapter 51 of title 31, United States
 10 Code.

11 **SEC. 5. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS; PROCEEDS**
 12 **OF SALE.**

13 (a) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
 14 authorized to be charged against the United States Mint
 15 Public Enterprise Fund, an amount not to exceed \$30,000
 16 to pay for the cost of the medal authorized under section
 17 2.

18 (b) PROCEEDS OF SALE.—Amounts received from the
 19 sale of duplicate bronze medals under section 3 shall be
 20 deposited in the United States Mint Public Enterprise
 21 Fund.

Passed the Senate May 20, 2009.

Attest: NANCY ERICKSON,
Secretary.